THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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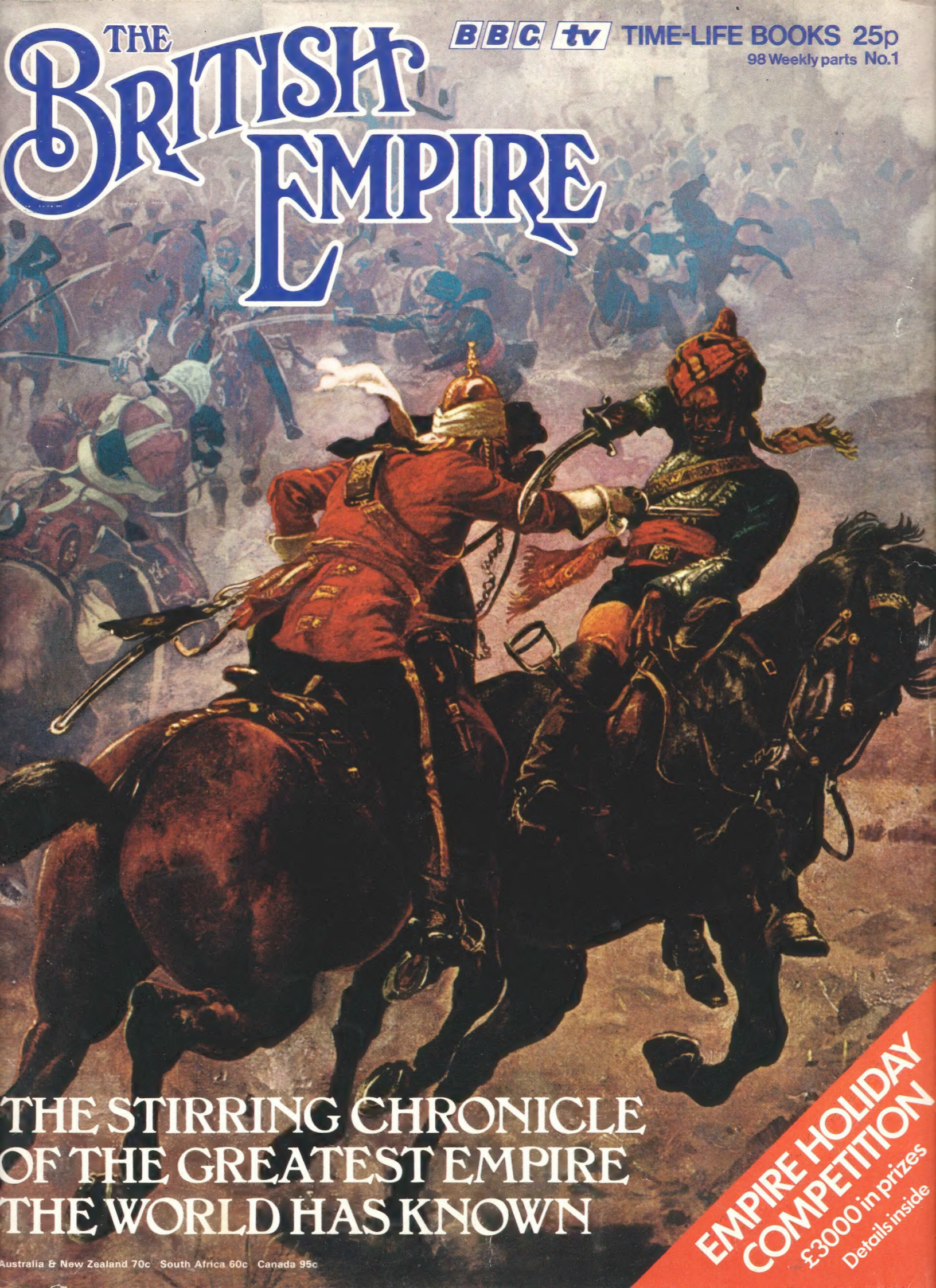

THE STIRRING CHRONICLE OF THE GREATEST EMPIRE THE WORLD HAS KNOWN

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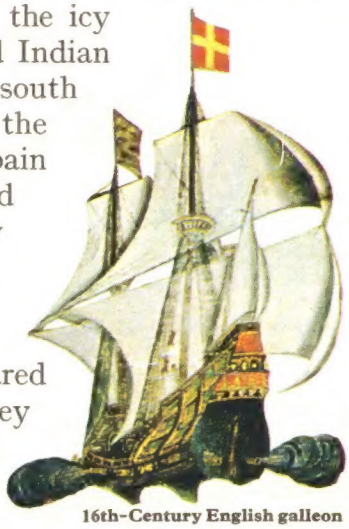
Details inside

A preview of what's to come

THE BRITISH EMPIRE is the story of the greatest Empire the world has ever known. It is a story of brilliant contrasts – of glory and disaster, of wise rule and brutal oppression: a story that shows what the British took from the world – and what they gave to it.

Spain goes under

The Empire's first magnificent era dawned with the exploits of Elizabeth I's daredevil explorers. These were the men who charted the icy wastes of the Arctic, braved Indian deserts on foot and voyaged south to hurl their challenges into the haughty face of Catholic Spain – Spain, which still claimed half the world as her own by God-given right. Spain trembled – the tubby, red-bearded Cornishman, Francis Drake, was so feared by the Spaniards that they nicknamed him "El Draque," the Dragon.



National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (detail)

16th-Century English galleon

Drake's bravado is still a part of legend: when the massive galleons of the Spanish Armada heaved into sight, he coolly finished his game of bowls before commencing battle. A legend perhaps – but it typified the spirit of the time, a spirit that, after the Spanish defeat, drove colonists and merchants to America, India, Africa and the Far East in search of fabled treasures.

Profits and power-struggles

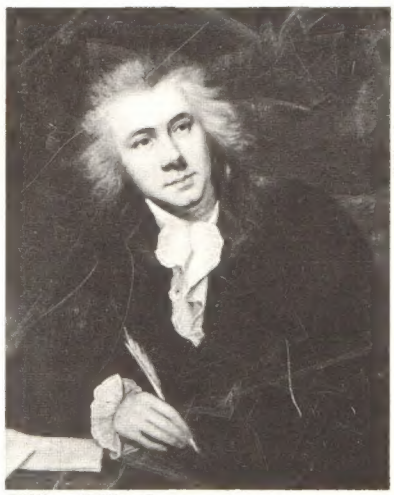
Such towering ambition and greed has its evil sides: you'll see how the traders of the East India Company, dazzled by the wealth of the Mughal Empire, made fortunes out of hapless Indians. You will read one of history's grisliest episodes – how sadistic, profit-hungry captains crammed the fetid, airless holds of their ships with African slaves for sale across the Atlantic.

In the three centuries of this trade, more than 3,000,000 negroes died, many of them in British vessels. You will have an opportunity to read a unique and moving account by a slave of his own capture and transportation.

Wilberforce House, Hull

Punished slave

You will trace Britain's great power struggle with France, a struggle which reverberated across the world. In America James Wolfe led an army up a slippery cliff path to seize Canada for Britain. In India, it was a pro-French Rajah who squeezed 123 Englishmen into a sweltering 18-foot-square dungeon in Calcutta and let most of them suffocate. And did you know that Captain Cook, who put New Zealand and Australia on the map about 1770, actually sailed with secret orders to stop the French challenge in the Pacific?



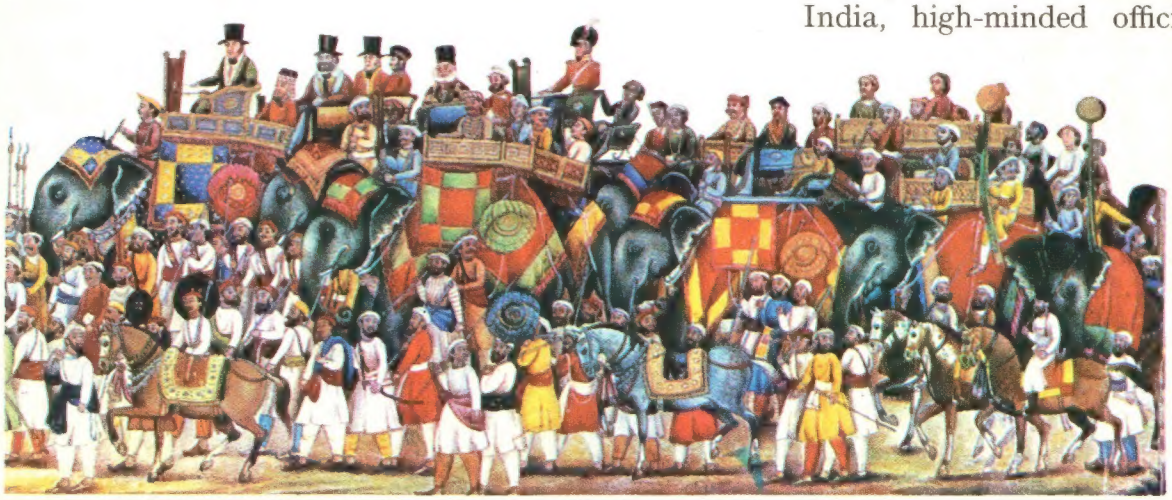
Wilberforce House, Hull

William Wilberforce

The good, the bad and the ugly

The French bogey had haunted Britain for centuries but with Napoleon's defeat, Britain began a new century of unprecedented imperial expansion.

You will see, in this heady, self-confident era, good and evil set in jarring contrast. William Wilberforce led a remorseless, Christian campaign to eradicate slavery, and its abolition in 1834 inspired the world. In India, high-minded officials ended the murderous activities of the Thugs, who to fulfil their "divine" duty, strangled some 10,000 wayfarers a year. One of them

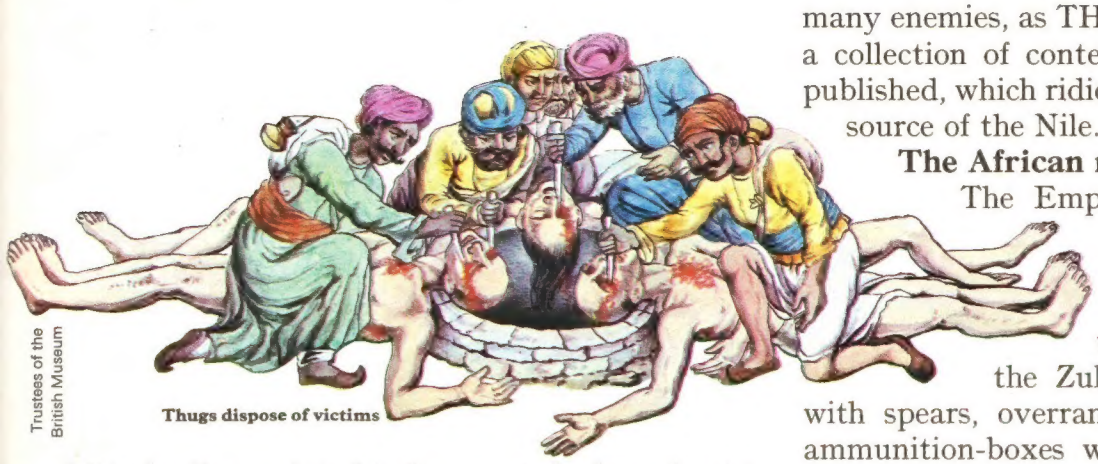


India Office Library

Mughal imperial procession

Please lift this page and carefully remove the staple securing this outer cover in order to detach your BRITISH EMPIRE CHRONOLOGY CHART.

Cover: The Queen's Bays at Lucknow (1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards; photographer, Hein Engelskirchem)



Trustees of the British Museum

Thugs dispose of victims

was bitterly disappointed to be arrested when about to achieve a coveted ambition: the murder of his 1,000th victim!

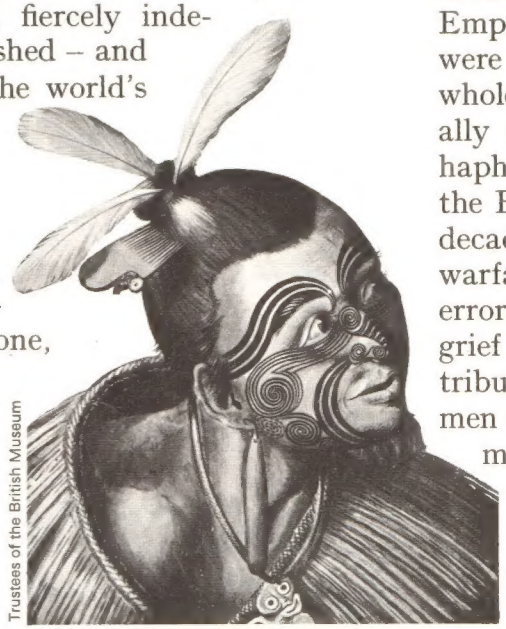
In 1857, the Indian soldiers, distressed by the unsettling British reforms, plunged India into a round of bloodletting – and convinced many Englishmen that an enlightened, if more remote, rule was the only way to guarantee peace. The 50 years after the Mutiny were a monument, not only to British power, but also to the highest ideals of imperial service.

Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris

Britain forces opium on China

Yet the same nation that produced moralists and humanitarian reformers also fostered unscrupulous fortune-hunters. The East India Company controlled the sale of opium in the Far East, and when in 1839 the Chinese Emperor banned opium – "the common sink of all iniquity" – the British rushed to arms – and seized several Chinese ports to ensure the security of their trade.

Elsewhere, Britain expanded voraciously. In New Zealand, the intelligent, fiercely independent Maoris were crushed – and then incorporated into the world's first welfare state. Australians rushed inland to search for gold. Railways drove westwards across Canada. Explorers like that intractable zealot, Livingstone, focused Britain's attention on the African interior. His exploits made him England's hero. But he was an impossible man, with many enemies, as THE BRITISH EMPIRE reveals in a collection of contemporary drawings, never before published, which ridicule the great man's search for the source of the Nile.



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Tattooed Maori

The African nightmare

The Empire, however, was beginning to break even as it was made. South Africa was the setting for the greatest disasters of the late 19th Century. In 1879, the Zulus, Black Spartans armed only with spears, overran a British army – because the ammunition-boxes were so rusty they could not be undone quickly enough. Then the patriarchal Boers – "the best mounted infantry since the Mongols," as Churchill called them – won their independence by humiliating the British at Majuba Hill.

The struggle broke out afresh in 1899. The spectre of defeat loomed large, for the Boers proved frighteningly adept at guerilla warfare. England poured in men and managed to relieve besieged Mafeking, an event greeted with hysterical joy in London, where it was universally – and falsely – believed that the town had endured incredible hardships. It took two more years – and the introduction of the first concentration camps – before victory was won. Now, Victoria ruled impassively over one-quarter of the surface of the globe. British rule seemed to many to be God-given, immutable.

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Boers in action

Decline and fall

But it was not to last. Many of the people who thought the Empire was indestructible were alive to see the whole gigantic edifice gradually dismantled. Built up haphazardly over centuries, the Empire was dissolved in decades. There was no lasting warfare. There was, despite the errors of Imperial rule, little grief on any side – a lasting tribute to the quality of the men who represented the mother country overseas.

Horniman Museum

"The Great White Queen": African view of Victoria

THE BRITISH EMPIRE CHRONOLOGICAL CHART

1500 Foundation for Empire 1500–1700

India

1600
East India Company founded.

1651
Navigation Laws require that colonial products be shipped to England in British vessels.

1681
Pennsylvania granted to William Penn.

The Americas

1583
Sir Humphrey Gilbert takes possession of **Newfoundland.**

1584
Sir Walter Raleigh establishes a colony in **Virginia.**

1612
Company formed to colonize **Bermuda.**

1619
First negro slaves arrive in Virginia.

1620
Pilgrim Fathers land at Cape Cod.

1620–30
Other East Coast colonies founded.

1625–32
Settlement of **St Christopher, Barbados, Nevis, Antigua** and **Montserrat.**

1664
Dutch surrender New Amsterdam **(New York)**

1686
Dominion of New England formed by consolidation of colonies.

Far East and Pacific

1670
Hudson's Bay Company incorporated.

Mediterranean and Middle East

1704
Gibraltar captured from Spain.

Africa

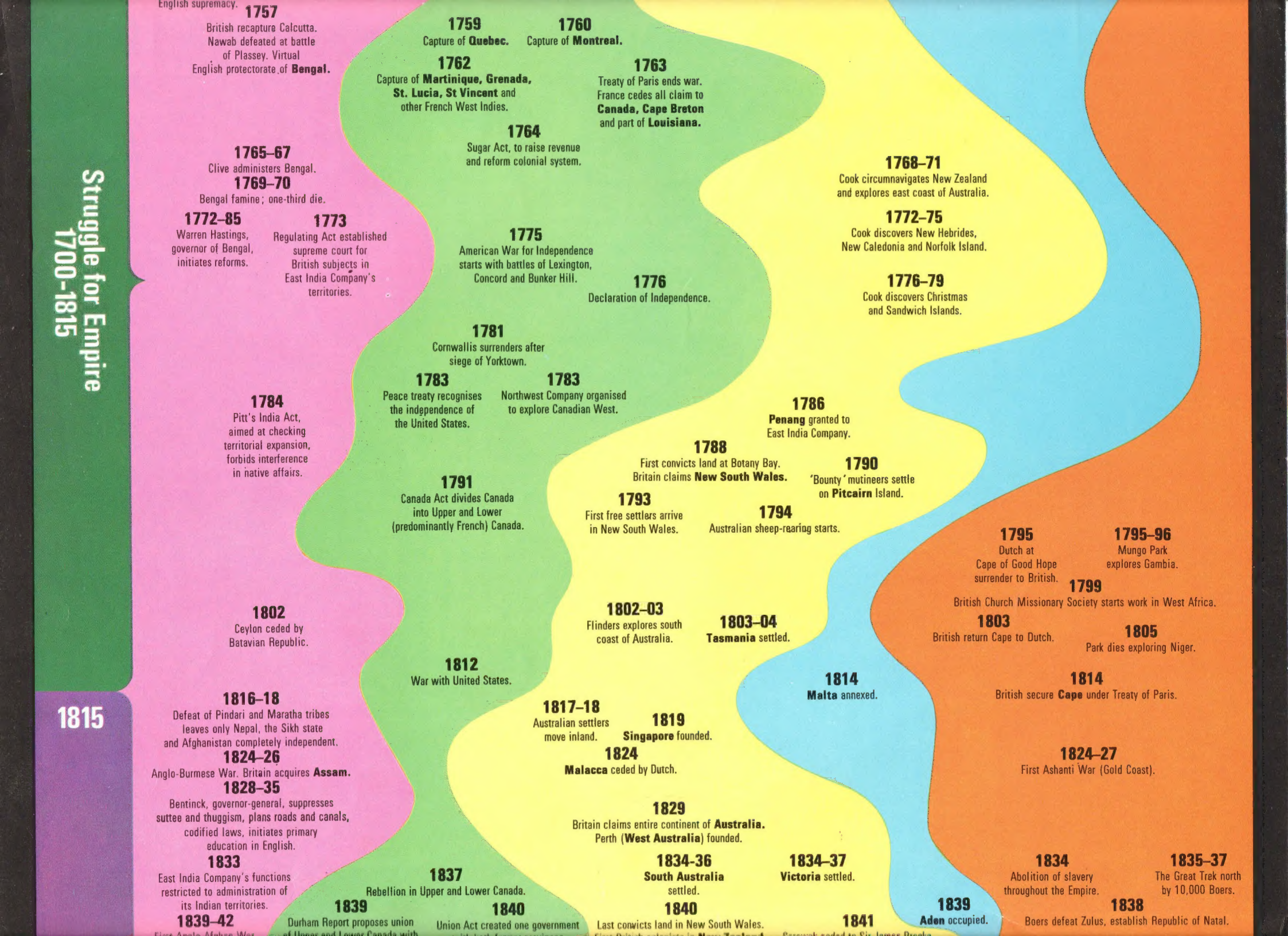
1700

1717
East India Company exempted from customs duties by Mogul emperor.

1733
Georgia founded.

1748

1755



English supremacy.

1757
British recapture Calcutta. Nawab defeated at battle of Plassey. Virtual English protectorate of **Bengal.**

1759
Capture of **Quebec.**

1760
Capture of **Montreal.**

1762
Capture of **Martinique, Grenada, St. Lucia, St Vincent** and other French West Indies.

1763
Treaty of Paris ends war. France cedes all claim to **Canada, Cape Breton** and part of **Louisiana.**

1764
Sugar Act, to raise revenue and reform colonial system.

1765–67
Clive administers Bengal.

1769–70
Bengal famine; one-third die.

1772–85
Warren Hastings, governor of Bengal, initiates reforms.

1773
Regulating Act established supreme court for British subjects in East India Company's territories.

1775
American War for Independence starts with battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill.

1776
Declaration of Independence.

1768–71
Cook circumnavigates New Zealand and explores east coast of Australia.

1772–75
Cook discovers New Hebrides, New Caledonia and Norfolk Island.

1776–79
Cook discovers Christmas and Sandwich Islands.

1781
Cornwallis surrenders after siege of Yorktown.

1783
Peace treaty recognises the independence of the United States.

1783
Northwest Company organised to explore Canadian West.

1784
Pitt's India Act, aimed at checking territorial expansion, forbids interference in native affairs.

1786
Penang granted to East India Company.

1788
First convicts land at Botany Bay. Britain claims **New South Wales.**

1790
'Bounty' mutineers settle on **Pitcairn** Island.

1791
Canada Act divides Canada into Upper and Lower (predominantly French) Canada.

1793
First free settlers arrive in New South Wales.

1794
Australian sheep-rearing starts.

1795
Dutch at Cape of Good Hope surrender to British.

1795–96
Mungo Park explores Gambia.

1799
British Church Missionary Society starts work in West Africa.

1802
Ceylon ceded by Batavian Republic.

1802–03
Flinders explores south coast of Australia.

1803–04
Tasmania settled.

1803
British return Cape to Dutch.

1805
Park dies exploring Niger.

1812
War with United States.

1814
Malta annexed.

1814
British secure **Cape** under Treaty of Paris.

1815

1816–18
Defeat of Pindari and Maratha tribes leaves only Nepal, the Sikh state and Afghanistan completely independent.

1817–18
Australian settlers move inland.

1819
Singapore founded.

1824–26
Anglo-Burmese War. Britain acquires **Assam.**

1824
Malacca ceded by Dutch.

1824–27
First Ashanti War (Gold Coast).

1828–35
Bentinck, governor-general, suppresses suttee and thuggism, plans roads and canals, codified laws, initiates primary education in English.

1829
Britain claims entire continent of **Australia.** Perth (**West Australia**) founded.

1833
East India Company's functions restricted to administration of its Indian territories.

1834-36
South Australia settled.

1834–37
Victoria settled.

1834
Abolition of slavery throughout the Empire.

1835–37
The Great Trek north by 10,000 Boers.

1837
Rebellion in Upper and Lower Canada.

1839–42

1839
Durham Report proposes union of Upper and Lower Canada with

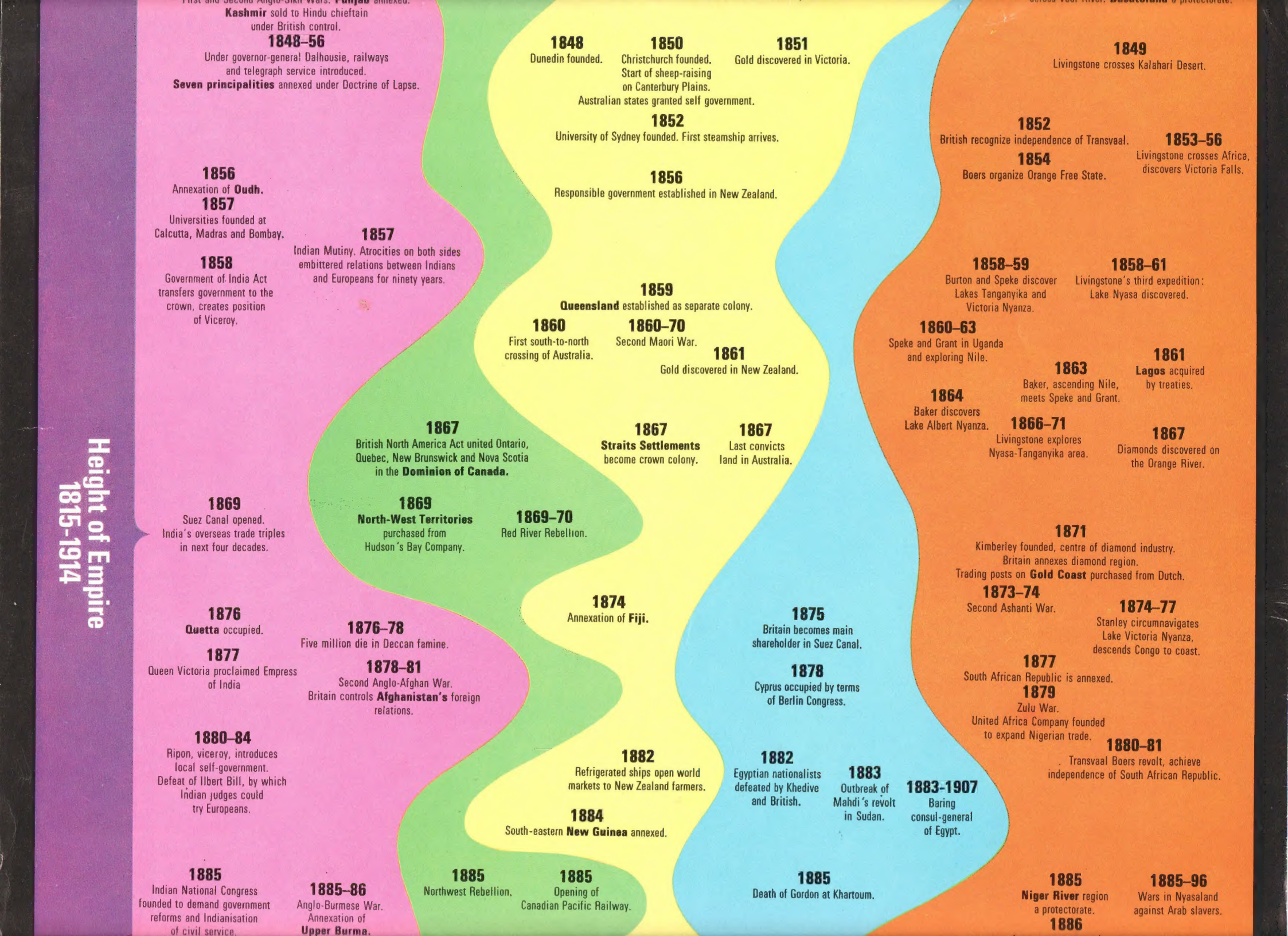
1840
Union Act created one government

1840
Last convicts land in New South Wales.

1841

1839
Aden occupied.

1838
Boers defeat Zulus, establish Republic of Natal.


Height of Empire
1815-1914
Kashmir sold to Hindu chieftain under British control.
1848–56
Under governor-general Dalhousie, railways and telegraph service introduced.
Seven principalities annexed under Doctrine of Lapse.
1848
Dunedin founded.
1850
Christchurch founded. Start of sheep-raising on Canterbury Plains.
Australian states granted self government.
1851
Gold discovered in Victoria.
1852
University of Sydney founded. First steamship arrives.
1849
Livingstone crosses Kalahari Desert.
1852
British recognize independence of Transvaal.
1853–56
Livingstone crosses Africa, discovers Victoria Falls.
1854
Boers organize Orange Free State.
1856
Annexation of Oudh.
1856
Responsible government established in New Zealand.
1857
Universities founded at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.
1857
Indian Mutiny. Atrocities on both sides embittered relations between Indians and Europeans for ninety years.
1858
Government of India Act transfers government to the crown, creates position of Viceroy.
1858–59
Burton and Speke discover Lakes Tanganyika and Victoria Nyanza.
1858–61
Livingstone's third expedition: Lake Nyasa discovered.
1859
Queensland established as separate colony.
1860
First south-to-north crossing of Australia.
1860–70
Second Maori War.
1861
Gold discovered in New Zealand.
1860–63
Speke and Grant in Uganda and exploring Nile.
1861
Lagos acquired by treaties.
1863
Baker, ascending Nile, meets Speke and Grant.
1864
Baker discovers Lake Albert Nyanza.
1866–71
Livingstone explores Nyasa-Tanganyika area.
1867
British North America Act united Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in the Dominion of Canada.
1867
Straits Settlements become crown colony.
1867
Last convicts land in Australia.
1867
Diamonds discovered on the Orange River.
1869
Suez Canal opened.
India's overseas trade triples in next four decades.
1869
North-West Territories purchased from Hudson's Bay Company.
1869–70
Red River Rebellion.
1871
Kimberley founded, centre of diamond industry.
Britain annexes diamond region.
Trading posts on Gold Coast purchased from Dutch.
1873–74
Second Ashanti War.
1874–77
Stanley circumnavigates Lake Victoria Nyanza, descends Congo to coast.
1874
Annexation of Fiji.
1875
Britain becomes main shareholder in Suez Canal.
1876
Quetta occupied.
1876–78
Five million die in Deccan famine.
1877
Queen Victoria proclaimed Empress of India
1877
South African Republic is annexed.
1878–81
Second Anglo-Afghan War.
Britain controls Afghanistan's foreign relations.
1878
Cyprus occupied by terms of Berlin Congress.
1879
Zulu War.
United Africa Company founded to expand Nigerian trade.
1880–81
Transvaal Boers revolt, achieve independence of South African Republic.
1880–84
Ripon, viceroy, introduces local self-government.
Defeat of Ilbert Bill, by which Indian judges could try Europeans.
1882
Refrigerated ships open world markets to New Zealand farmers.
1882
Egyptian nationalists defeated by Khedive and British.
1883
Outbreak of Mahdi's revolt in Sudan.
1883-1907
Baring consul-general of Egypt.
1884
South-eastern New Guinea annexed.
1885
Indian National Congress founded to demand government reforms and Indianisation of civil service.
1885–86
Anglo-Burmese War.
Annexation of Upper Burma.
1885
Northwest Rebellion.
1885
Opening of Canadian Pacific Railway.
1885
Death of Gordon at Khartoum.
1885
Niger River region a protectorate.
1885–96
Wars in Nyasaland against Arab slavers.
1886

Protectorate over **Sarawak** and **North Borneo.**

1892
Protectorate over
Gilbert and Ellice Islands.

Rhodes' British South Africa Company chartered.

1890
British Protectorate over Zanzibar.

1892–98
Nyasaland pacified.

1893–94
Third Ashanti War.

1895
East Africa Protectorate established.
Jameson Raid against Boers in Transvaal.

1895–96
Fourth Ashanti War.

1896–98
Kitchener reconquers **Sudan.**

1898–1905
Curzon viceroy.
Administrative reforms.
Expedition to **Tibet.**

1899–1902
Boer War. After early successes, Boers defeated in field and adopt guerrilla tactics. Finally accept British sovereignty.

1900
Protectorate over **Tonga.**

1900–03
Northern Nigeria conquered.

1901
States unite to form the
Commonwealth of Australia.
Cook Islands annexed to New Zealand.

1901
Ashanti kingdom annexed, joined to **Gold Coast.**

1905
Partition of Bengal. **East Bengal** (mainly Muslim) and **Assam** detached from province.

1906
All-India Muslim League founded.

1906
British New Guinea becomes an Australian possession.

1907
New Zealand achieves Dominion status.

1909
Canberra made Australian capital.

1910
Formation of
Union of South Africa.

1914
Malaya fully under British control.

1914
Egypt proclaimed a British protectorate.
Cyprus formally annexed.

1914

1918–19
Influenza epidemic: five million die.

1919
Rowlatt Acts: agitators can be interned without trial.
Amritsar Massacre: General Dyer orders troops to fire on unarmed crowd: 379 killed.
Government of India Act, reforms introduced.

1920
German **New Guinea** and **Samoa** under Australian and New Zealand mandates.

1920
Palestine and **Mesopotamia** (Iraq) become mandates.

1920
Mandate over German East Africa (Tanganyika).
British East Africa renamed **Kenya,** made crown colony.

1921
Non-co-operation movement, led by Gandhi, at its height. Terrorist outbreaks.

1922
Egypt independent.

1923
Southern Rhodesia a crown colony.
Northern Rhodesia also a crown colony.

1927
Iraq independent.

1928
India swept by strikes.

1930
Congress empowers Gandhi to begin new civil disobedience campaign. He is arrested and imprisoned without trial.

1931
Gandhi released for discussions with government.

1932
Gandhi re-arrested, Congress declared illegal, non-violent demonstrations crushed.

1933–34
Civil disobedience movement slows down.

1933
Australia claims one-third of Antarctic.

1935
Government of India Act.
Burma and **Aden** separated from India.
Eleven provinces created.

1935
British oil pipeline from Mosul to Haifa opened.

1936
British troops withdraw from Egypt. (apart from Canal Zone and Alexandria naval base).

1946
Hindu-Moslem riots.
Full independence offered.
Jinnah insists on separate Moslem state of **Pakistan.**

1947
Mountbatten viceroy. Untouchability outlawed.
Independence of **India,** partition of India and Pakistan.
Two million refugees exchanged.

Thus ended Britain's Indian Empire—
the greatest step in the change from world-wide Empire
into a tenuous, still-evolving Commonwealth.

End of Empire
1914 onwards

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